

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, HEADED "A CONGRESSIONAL TEST ON ARMS SALES."

2. RISING APPREHENSION OVER THE SALE OF AMERICAN ARMS ABROAD LENDS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE HEARING THAT A SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE HAS SCHEDULED ON THE PROPOSED \$3.8 BILLION SALE OF SOPHISTICATED F-16 JET FIGHTERS TO IRAN. FOR IRAN TWO YEARS AGO GOT FROM THE OIL-PRICE INCREASES REVENUES FINALLY COMMENSURATE WITH ITS MILITARY AMBITIONS. IT HAS SINCE BEEN BUYING ARMS WITH A KIND OF DRUNKEN FERVOR.

3. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN COASTING ON THE PREMISE THAT IRAN'S GOOD WILL IN OIL, DIPLOMACY AND STRATEGY--NOT TO SPEAK OF THE BILLIONS IN PROCEEDS FROM THE SALES--IS SUFFICIENT CAUSE TO CONTINUE THIS EXTRAORDINARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP. IF OFFICIALS HAVE PONDERED WHAT IRAN'S LARGER PURPOSES MIGHT BE, OR WHAT RISKS THE UNITED STATES MIGHT BE TAKING BY SPONSORING IRAN'S ARSENAL AND PROVIDING THE

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THOUSANDS OF TECHNICIANS TO MAKE IT WORK, THEY HAVE KEPT

THEIR PUZZLEMENT TO THEMSELVES. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT IN ADDITION TO SOME \$10 BILLION WORTH OF MILITARY HARDWARE AND

SERVICES ALREADY SOLD, SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER DISCUSSED ANOTHER WHOPPING PACKAGE ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO TEHERAN. THE NEW F-16 ITEM IS APPARENTLY A PART OF IT.

4. JUST THIS YEAR, IN BELATED RESPONSE TO JUST SUCH APPARENT ARMS ORGIES, CONGRESS ENACTED LEGISLATION GIVING ITSELF NEW POWERS TO REVIEW EXECUTIVE-SPONSORED COMMERCIAL ARMS SALES. THIS IS THE CATEGORY IN WHICH THE HUGE DEALS WITH IRAN, AND THE ARABS, ARE MADE. PREVIOUSLY, LEGISLATORS HAD TENDED TO LIMIT THEIR CONCERN TO THE NOW RELATIVELY SMALLER CATEGORY OF DEALS IN WHICH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PLAYS A FINANCIAL PART. IT IS UNDER THE NEW LEGISLATION, WHICH GIVES CONGRESS 30 DAYS IN WHICH TO DISAPPROVE A SALE, THAT THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS AID SUBCOMMITTEE IS PREPARING A HEARING ON THE F-16S.

5. THE TIME IS RELATIVELY SHORT IN WHICH THE CONGRESS CAN DRAFT AN INTELLIGENT QUESTIONNAIRE. ANY USEFUL INQUIRY, FOR INSTANCE, MUST GO BEYOND HAND-WRINGING INTO EXPLORATION OF THE WHOLE BROAD RANGE OF POLICIES, COMMITMENTS AND INTERESTS OF WHICH THIS PROJECTED SALE IS BUT ONE PART. IT IS RATHER LIKE TRYING TO SHOE A RUNNING HORSE. YET THE BEAST MUST BE SLOWED AND THE EFFORT MADE, IF THE CONGRESS IS TO EXERCISE IN PRACTICE THE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IT IS SO EAGER TO CLAIM IN THEORY. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT TEST.

6. CHARACTERISTICALLY, THE ADMINISTRATION, HAVEING REMOVED THE RESTRAINTS FROM ITS ARMS SALES TO THE OIL-HAPPY STATES IN GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE, IS MUTTERING IN DARK DISMAY NOW THAT THE CONGRESS IS FINALLY TRYING TO CATCH UP. RATHER THAN CONCEDE EARLIER FAULT, THE ADMINISTRATION COMPLAINS THAT THE CONGRESS IS RUDELY BUTTING IN. IT'S TRUE. BUT THERE'S NO CHOICE. IN A RUNAWAY SITUTATION, RESTORING POLICY TO THE KIND OF REASONABLE STANDARD WHICH WILL COMMAND AN INFORMED WASHINGTON-WIDE CONSENSUS IS TOUGH GOING. IT NOT ONLY REQUIRES A BLENDING OF COMPLEX POLICY FACTORS. IT ALSO FORCES A CONFRONTATION OF INSTITUTIONS, AS THE ONE UNCLASSIFIED

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ATTEMPTS TO SHARE POWER IN AN AREA WHICH THE OTHER IS ACCUSTOMED TO REGARDING AS ITS PRIVATE PRESERVE. THAT IS WHY THE F-16 HEARING, WHICH TOUCHES JUST ONE ARMS DEAL AMON MANY THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS IN TRAIN, CANNOT BE THE EN OF THE ROAD.

7. LIKE OTHER FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, IRAN IS TROUBLED TO FIN THAT IT MUST DEAL INCREASINGLY WITH SEVERAL OFTEN COMPETING

SOURCES OF POWER IN WASHINGTON. IT FEELS IT ENTERED IN GOOD FAITH INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE APPROPRIATE AMERICAN AUTHORITY, AND IT IS TEMPTED TO QUESTION THE MOTIVES AS WELL AS THE JUDGMENT OF THE PARTY NOW TRYING TO GET INTO THE ACT

ONE ALMOST BEGINS TO PITY POOR IRAN, AND POOR SAUDI ARABIA, WHICH IS IN THE SIDEWINDER MISSILE MARKET, OR WOULD LIKE TO BE, IN A BIG WAY--AND POOR WHO'S NEXT. BUT THERE IS A LARGER MORAL TO ALL THIS. THE EXECUTIVE MUST BE READIER TO SHARE ITS POWER WITH CONGRESS. THE CONGRESS, IN TURN, MUST ACCEPT THE BROADER "EXECUTIVE" CONTEXT IN WHICH DECISIONS ON PARTICULAR ARMS DEALS MUST BE MADE. AND EVEN THEN, FOREIGN BUYERS ACCUSTOMED TO WORKING WITHIN THE FRAME OF A RIGIDLY AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT (AS MOST OF OUR ARMS BUYERS TEND TO BE) WILL HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FACT THAT WHEN THEY ARE DOING BUSINESS WITH THE UNITED STATES, THEY ARE DEALING WITH A FREE-WHEELING POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT CANNOT ALWAYS GUARANTEE A FINAL, AUTHORITATIVE, AND IRREVERSIBLE ANSWER. (END TEXT.)
ROBINSON

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